Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently Amended) A method for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a manufacturer of a feature of the product over a network during the configuration, the method comprising:

receiving into a configuration engine of the seller a selected feature from the customer, wherein the selected feature is to be made by the manufacturer based on the customer's selection;

communicating, from the configuration engine of the seller to a manufacturer system, the selected feature, the communication being during the configuration with the customer, wherein the manufacturer system is associated with a manufacturer of the selected feature, wherein the manufacturer is independent from the seller, and wherein the customer dynamically interacts with the manufacturer system;

receiving into the configuration engine from the manufacturer system over the network an automated real-time response to the communicated selected feature, the automated real-time response including an availability date that corresponds to the selected feature, the response being received during the configuration with the customer; and

updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect the selected feature and the availability date.

36-38. (Canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) A method for selling a configurable product incorporating at least one feature to be selected by a customer, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a supplier of a feature of the product over a network during the configuration, the method comprising:

(a) receiving a feature selection from the customer at a seller;

(b) updating an inventory library based upon the received selection to reflect constraints imposed by the received feature selection, the constraints relating to a technical feature limitation, a price limitation or availability of the configurable product;

(c) providing the received selection to a supplier system during the configuration of the product with the customer, wherein the supplier system is associated with a supplier of the selected feature, wherein the supplier is independent from the seller;

(d) receiving real-time information from the supplier system comprising at least one of availability date and price for the selected feature, the information being received by the customer during the configuration;

(e) wherein when an indication is received from the customer indicating the customer is not satisfied with the availability date or price, providing to the supplier system at least one of a customer desired availability date and a customer desired price for the selected feature;

(f) providing to the customer accommodation data from the supplier system, the accommodation data responsive to the at least one of the customer desired availability date and the customer desired price for the selected feature, wherein the accommodation data includes a second availability date or a second price of the selected feature; ~~and~~

(g) updating at least one of a manufacturing bill of materials, a pricing bill of materials, and a configuration bill of materials based on the received selection;

(h) deriving a manufacturing bill of materials from a configuration bill of materials; and

(i) mapping each feature represented in the configuration bill of materials to a corresponding hierarchal position in the manufacturing bill of materials, wherein each mapping is capable of being any one of a set of a one-to-one, a many-to-one, a one-to-many, and a many-to-many mapping.

40-49. (Canceled)

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, further comprising: repeating the steps of receiving into a configuration engine a selected feature, communicating to a

manufacturer system the selected feature, receiving from the manufacturer system an automated real-time response including an availability date, and updating a number of times until the configuration is complete thereby yielding a completed bill of materials.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the step of receiving from the manufacturer system an automated real-time response including an availability date is preceded by the step of communicating the selected feature to a vendor, wherein the manufacturer obtains materials from the vendor for the selected feature.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, the method further comprising: in response to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer-specified availability date to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer system is in response to a customer-specified availability date communicated to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer system is in response to a customer-specified price communicated to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, further comprising: deriving, from the in-process bill of materials, an in-process manufacturing bill of materials that reflects the received availability date that corresponds to the selected feature.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the automated real-time response also includes a received price that corresponds to the selected feature.

57. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56, the method further comprising: in response to the received price being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer-specified price to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56, wherein the price received is in response to a customer-specified availability date communicated to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

59. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56, wherein the price received is in response to a customer-specified price communicated to at least one of the configuration engine or the manufacturer system.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein a relationship between the customer and the seller has a configuration side associated with the customer, and a resource planning side associated with the seller, and the customer-seller relationship is respectively one of a consumer-seller relationship, a seller-supplier relationship and a supplier-vendor relationship.

61. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, further comprising:

in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the configuration side, deriving an in-process pricing bill of materials from the in-process bill of materials, wherein the in-process pricing bill of materials reflects the price of the selected feature; and

in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the resource planning side, deriving the in-process pricing bill of materials from an in-process manufacturing bill of materials that is derived from the in-process bill of materials and reflects the received availability date of the selected feature.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the pricing bill of materials is derived from the configuration bill of materials.

63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the pricing bill of materials is derived from the manufacturing bill of materials.

64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 39, wherein the step (g) of updating at least one of a manufacturing bill of materials, a pricing bill of materials, and a configuration bill of materials is based upon the accommodation data from the supplier system.

65-67. (Canceled)

68. (Currently Amended) A method for configuring a product having at least one selectable feature, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a supplier of a feature of the product over a network during the configuration, the method comprising:

receiving, from a customer, a selection of a feature of the product at a configuration engine of a seller of the product, the seller being a seller of the product to the customer;

communicating the received selection from the configuration engine to a supplier system of a supplier to the seller, the communication being during the configuration with the customer, wherein the supplier system is associated with a supplier of the selected feature, wherein the supplier is independent from the seller;

receiving into the configuration engine from the supplier system an automated response to the communicated received selection, the automated real-time response including an availability date of the selected feature, the response being received during the configuration with the customer;

updating an in-process bill of materials based upon the availability date of the selected feature;

deriving from the in-process bill of materials, a manufacturing bill of materials that reflects the received availability date that corresponds to the selected feature;

mapping each feature represented in the in-process bill of materials to a corresponding hierarchal position in the manufacturing bill of materials, wherein each mapping is capable of being any one of a set of a one-to-one, a many-to-one, a one-to-many, and a many-to-many mapping; and

using the updated in-process bill of materials to determine a first availability date of the product, the first availability date of the product being based on at least the availability date of the selected feature; and

providing the first availability date of the product to the customer.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the automated real-time response is generated by a manufacturer of the selected feature.

70. (Canceled)

71. (Currently Amended) A method for configuring a product having at least one selectable feature, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a supplier of a feature of the product over a network during the configuration, the method comprising:

receiving, from a customer, a selection of a feature of the product at a configuration engine of a seller of the product, wherein the selected feature is to be supplied by the supplier to the seller of the product based on the customer's selection;

communicating the received selection from the configuration engine to a supplier system, the communication being during the configuration with the customer, wherein the supplier system is associated with a supplier of the selected feature, wherein the supplier is independent from the seller, and wherein the customer dynamically interacts with the supplier system; and

receiving into the configuration engine from the supplier system an automated real-time response to the communicated received selection, the response being received during the configuration with the customer;

wherein the real-time automated response includes a plurality of availability dates associated with the selected feature, each of the plurality of availability dates associated with a different price of the selected feature.

72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, wherein the first availability date of the product, determined using the updated in-process bill of materials, is further based on an availability date of another selectable feature.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 68, further including receiving, at the configuration engine, a feature price that corresponds to the selected feature.

74. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 73, further including updating a product price responsive to the received feature price, and providing the updated product price to the customer.

75. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 73, wherein the received feature price is responsive to a customer-specified availability date communicated to the seller and to the supplier system.

76. (Currently Amended) A method for configuring a product using a computer network, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a manufacturer of a feature of the product over the network during the configuration, the method comprising:

receiving at a configuration engine a set of constraints defining a first set of valid configurations of a product, the product having at least a first selectable feature and a second selectable feature, the set of constraints being determined by a seller or a manufacturer;

receiving at the configuration engine a customer-specified constraint, the customer specified constraint being received from a customer and being received using the computer network, wherein the customer-specified constraint includes a date by which the product is to be delivered;

receiving at the configuration engine a selection of the first selectable feature, the received selection being received from the customer and being received using the computer network;

communicating, from the configuration engine of the seller to the manufacturer, the selection of the first selectable feature, the communication being during a configuration of the product with the customer, wherein the manufacturer is independent from the seller;

determining a second set of valid configurations of the product, the second set of valid configurations being a subset of the first set of valid configurations and being constrained by the customer specified constraint and the received selection,

wherein the determination of the second set of valid configurations is a real-time response to the selection of the first selectable feature and the customer-specified constraint;

determining at least two possible configurations of the second selectable feature that satisfy the second set of valid configurations of the product; and

providing to the customer from the configuration engine only the determined at least two configurations of the second selectable feature, using the computer network.

77. (Canceled)

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, wherein the customer specified constraint includes a price of the product or a feature price.

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further including determining a feature price using the received selection and using the feature price to update a product price.

80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further including determining a feature availability date using the received selection, and using the feature availability date to determine a product availability date.

81. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, wherein determining at least two configurations of the second selectable feature that satisfy the second set of valid configurations includes identifying a third configuration of the second selectable feature that would be an invalid configuration due to the customer specified constraint.

82. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 76, further including receiving at the configuration engine a feature availability date from a supply system of a manufacturer.

83-97 (Canceled)

98. (Currently Amended) A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and a supplier of one or more of the configurable features over a network during the configuration, the system comprising:

a configuration engine of a seller configured for receiving a selection of a feature of the product from a customer, the seller being a seller of the product to the customer;

a communication module coupled to the configuration engine for communicating the selected feature from the seller to the supplier, and for receiving over the network an automated real-time response, including an availability date of the selected feature, from the supplier to the configuration engine, the supplier being a supplier of the selected feature to the seller and being independent from the seller, wherein the communicating and receiving occur during the configuration with the customer; ~~and~~

a first storage area coupled to one of the configuration engine and the communication module for storing an in-process bill of materials that reflects the selected feature;

a manufacturing bill of materials module coupled to the communication module for deriving a manufacturing bill of materials from the in-process bill of materials, wherein each feature represented in the in-process bill of materials is mapped to a corresponding hierarchal position in the manufacturing bill of materials, wherein each mapping is capable of being any one of a set of a one-to-one, a many-to-one, a one-to-many, and a many-to-many mapping.

99. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein after the customer has completed configuring the product, the in-process bill of materials represents a completed bill of materials.

100. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, the communication module communicates a customer-specified availability date to the supplier.

101. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein the automated real-time response is in response to a customer-specified availability date communicated to the supplier by the communication module.

102. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein the automated real-time response is in response to a customer-specified price communicated to the supplier by the communication module.

103. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein an in-process manufacturing bill of materials is derived from the in-process bill of materials, and reflects the availability date of the selected feature.

104. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, further comprising:

a second storage area coupled to one of the configuration engine and the communication module for storing an in-process manufacturing bill of materials that reflects the availability date of the selected feature; and

a third storage area coupled to one of the configuration engine and the communication module for storing an in-process pricing bill of materials that reflects a price of the selected feature.

105. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein the communication module is also for communicating a price of the selected feature from the supplier to the configuration engine.

106. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 105, wherein the communication module comprises:

an availability date communication module for communicating the availability date of the selected feature from the supplier to the configuration engine; and

a price communication module for communicating the price of the selected feature to the configuration engine.

107. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, wherein a relationship between the customer and the seller has a configuration side associated with the customer, and a resource planning side associated with the seller, and the customer-seller relationship is respectively one of a consumer-seller relationship, a seller-manufacturer relationship and a manufacturer-vendor relationship.

108. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 107, wherein:

in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the configuration side, an in-process pricing bill of materials is derived from the in-process bill of

materials, wherein the in-process pricing bill of materials reflects the price of the selected feature; and

in response to the price of the selected feature being determined on the resource planning side, the in-process pricing bill of materials is derived from an in-process manufacturing bill of materials that is derived from the in-process bill of materials and reflects the received availability date of the selected feature.

109. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, further comprising:

a user interface coupled to the configuration engine for allowing the customer to interact with the system..

110. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, further comprising:

an inventory library coupled to the configuration engine for providing the customer a number of the configurable features that can be selected to configure the product.

111-114. (Canceled)

115. (Previously Presented) A computer program product, stored on a computer-readable medium, for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor performs the steps of:

receiving a selected product feature from a customer;

communicating over a network the selected feature to a supplier;

receiving from a supplier over the network an automated real-time response to the communicated selected feature including an availability date that corresponds to the product feature selected by the customer, the supplier being a supplier of the product feature to a seller and being independent from the seller, the customer being a customer of the seller, wherein the communicating and receiving is during a configuration of the product with the customer,

wherein the customer is allowed to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with the supplier of the selected feature of the product over a network during the configuration.

116. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 132, further comprising:

updating a bill of materials to reflect the accommodation received from the supplier.

117. (Currently Amended) A computer program product, stored on a computer readable medium, for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein in response to the computer program product being executed by a processor, the processor performs the steps of:

responsive to a customer selecting a feature of the product, receiving over a network at a seller an automated real-time response including an availability date that corresponds to the selected feature, the automated real-time response being from a manufacturer of the selected feature, the response being received by the customer from the seller during the configuration of the product, wherein the manufacturer is independent from the seller;

responsive to the received availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating a customer-specified availability date to the manufacturer;

updating an in-process bill of materials to reflect the selected feature;

deriving a manufacturing bill of materials from the in-process bill of materials;

mapping each feature represented in the in-process bill of materials to a corresponding hierarchal position in the manufacturing bill of materials, wherein each mapping is capable of being any one of a set of a one-to-one, a many-to-one, a one-to-many, and a many-to-many mapping; and

in response to the customer being satisfied with a set of sales parameters including the availability date of the selected feature, submitting a completed bill of materials to the manufacturer over the Internet,

wherein the customer is allowed to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with the manufacturer of the selected feature of the product over a network during the configuration.

118. (Previously Presented) A system for configuring a product that is associated with a number of configurable features, wherein the system allows a customer to dynamically

interact with a seller of the product and a supplier of the product over the Internet during the configuration, the system comprising:

configuration engine means for receiving at a seller of the product a selection by the customer of a product feature, the product feature being one of the number of configurable features, and for validating a number of constraints associated with the selected product feature;

communication module means coupled to the configuration engine means for communicating from the seller to the supplier the selected product feature, and for communicating over a network real-time availability date of the selected product feature from the supplier to the configuration engine means, the supplier being a supplier of the selected product feature to the seller and being independent from the seller, wherein the communicating occurs during the configuration with the customer; and

storage area means coupled to at least one of the configuration engine means and the communication module means for storing an in-process bill of materials that reflects the product feature selected by the user.

119. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer system over the network is provided by an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

120-124. (Canceled)

125. (Currently Amended) A system for selling a configurable product incorporating at least one feature to be selected by a customer from a catalog of selectable features, wherein the method allows a customer to dynamically interact with a seller of the product and with a supplier of a feature of the product over the network during the configuration, the system comprising:

a configuration engine;

an inventory library coupled to ~~a~~ the configuration engine of a seller of the configurable product, the inventory library configured for providing the catalog of selectable features, the catalog of selectable features corresponding to a particular configurable product;

a user interface coupled to the configuration engine using the network Internet, the user interface for displaying the catalog of selectable features and for receiving customer-specified constraints ~~desires~~; and

a supplier system coupled to the configuration engine using the network, the supplier system being associated with the supplier and being configured for providing an automated real-time response, including at least one of availability information and price information to at least one of the user interface, the configuration engine, and the inventory library, wherein the supplier is independent from the seller, wherein the providing of the automated real-time response occurs during a configuration with the customer,

wherein the configuration determines a set of valid configurations of the product, the set of valid configurations being constrained by a customer-specified constraint and a selection of a feature, wherein only the valid configurations are provided to the customer from the configuration engine.

126. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 125, wherein the user interface, configuration engine, and supplier system are remotely located with respect to each other.

127. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 125, wherein the configuration engine further comprises:

a configuration application,

a price communication module,

an availability communication module, and

means for creating and updating at least one of a configuration bill of materials, a manufacturing bill of materials, and a pricing bill of materials.

128-130. (Canceled)

131. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98, where in the configuration engine is configured for validating a number of constraints associated with the selected feature, the constraints relating to compatibility between the selected feature and other features of the product or availability of the product including the selected feature.

132. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 115, wherein the processor performs the additional steps of:

in response to the availability date being unsatisfactory to the customer, communicating over the network a customer-specified availability date to the supplier; and

receiving from the supplier over the network an automated real-time response including an accommodation based on the customer specified availability date.

133. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35, wherein the availability date received from the manufacturer system over the network is provided to or by a supply chain planning (SCP) system